

App. F. IX-4

Previous References.

Later References.

1948-69
(CB.)

35-5-68
File No. ~~37748~~

Serial Nos. 1

GENERAL AND REVENUE SECRETARIAT

Serial Nos. One

Part B for Dec 48
SUBJECT

The Refugee Problem in India

1/11/48
16/3

The Refugee Problem in India

3275

General and Revenue
Secretariat

File No.

of 194

App. F. III-2/3

Serial
No.

Letter D/6.11.48 from Sri Vatsamal
G. Gidvani, B. Bay to the
General Government in India.
Submitted. This elaborate
circular letter
comprising of some 4,500
words discusses the Refugee
problem facing the entire
country and proposes the
22 suggestions contained on
page 9 of the P. V. D. for
adoption as a remedial
measure.

(2) The proposals made
are mostly of a general
nature and pertain to
the Central Govt, to whom
copies have already been
sent by the author.

(3) The P. V. D. may be
perused and filed.

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Cover addressed to the Premier Mysore State

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OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF MINISTER
No. P 2074
Date, 15/11/48

VANDI MATRAM, ME
OF THE .5409
27 NOV 1948

Abu Bakar Mansion,
3rd. Floor,
Causeway Road, Fort,
Bombay Dated 6th. Novr. 1948

To,

The Honourable Prime Minister,
Indian Dominion Government,
New Delhi

Hone minister
JTC

Dear Sir,

Recd
14/11

I am an active Congress worker from Thar Parkar District in the province of Sind (Pakistan). I have always played my humble part in all the civil disobedience movements launched from time to time, and have been to prison for various terms of imprisonment.

After the creation of Pakistan, and during the migration of Hindus from Sind, I organized a camp at Mirpurkhas in Thar Parkar District on the Jodhpur railway, and rendered all possible help to the refugees. This was resented by the Sind Government, and I was arrested and detained under the Maintenance of Public Security Ordinance 1947. This act of the Government was resented by Bapujee, who made a feeling reference to it in one of his post-prayer speeches.

Utter unconcern of the Indian Government, officials, press and the people to the fate of the displaced persons in Indian Union or to those whose unfortunate lot is to still linger in Sind, under circumstances beyond their control, has, I must confess, greatly shaken my faith in the leaders, now saddled in power, the very leaders under whose command, in the pre-independence days I had the privilege to fight many a freedom battles. I am therefore constrained to pen you this letter, and to unburden my deep feelings, with a hope that you will render a fresh over the Himalayan injustice meted out to the blood of your blood and the flesh of your flesh and see your way to reshape the policy of Government in regard to displaced persons problem.

I have of course a grouse against the Congress High Command for consenting to the partition proposals without obtaining a clear mandate from the nation or even the All India Congress Committee. The minorities have a right to complain that the partition was forcibly thrust down their throats. Further the Congress leaders, including those who were holding the reins of the Government, held out solemn

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pledges in the open session of the all India Congress Committee, when the partition resolution was pressed for acceptance, that they would stand by the minorities in case the majority oppressed or tyrannized over the minority.

In East Pakistan and Sind, day in and day out the majority is using all instruments of oppression to coerce helpless minority and has succeeded in this satanic object to a very large extent. Murder and looting, rape and conversion are still the order of the day in East Pakistan and even in Sind, which now holds only a microscopic minority. Law and order, security of life and property is enforced by Government machinery in regard to Pakistani muslims only. No wonder, terrorised minorities have willingly chosen to migrate. More than paper protests, the Indian Union Government, did not as much as move a finger to stem this tide of barbarity in Pakistan. These were the men who had vowed to stand by the minorities through thick and thin. It was only when the non-violent, non-militant, apostle of truth became furious at the shocking state of affairs, that the inert and spineless Government woke up and agreed to migration on Government basis.

There after it was presumed that the Indian Government would shoulder the full responsibility and render all assistance to the migrants both in India and Pakistan. But it hurts me to state that the Government and its bureaucratic officials, whether deliberately or not, have signally failed in their duties both here and in Pakistan. The result. The poor evacuees are left to their fate, to die a death of torture, starvation, humiliation and disgrace as best as they can.

In the beginning these displaced persons were lying in open without any protection from heat and cold. Later some were shifted to camps, where there was absolutely no arrangement of food and in certain cases of even water. Privacy and decency was a luxury which the poor sufferers dare not aspire. They patiently bore all manner of hardships hoping that their own popular and responsible Government would one day remember them and look after their most elementary comforts and conveniences.

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It is now twelve months, that the suffering mass entered a life which can only be described as HELL. To day at least 45% of them are permanently confined to beds in every camp all over India, suffering from Scabies, and other ailments, as a result of mal-nutrition.

In States like Jodhpur, Bikaner Ajmer-Merwara etc their suffering is beyond expression. They are denied the facility of rations, and in several instances are allowed only un-chaffed barley or red Jowar or Maize, which in Sind was the staple food for horses and asses. Not a "charki" of cloth has been ~~cut~~^{let} out ~~to~~ them. They are charged 200 to 400% more than the normal rents, This is not all. They are locked upon and treated as criminals.

In complete contrast the muslim leaguers and votaries of Pakistan continue to earn both in India and Pakistan, (their income in many cases has increased four-fold) while the suffering evacuees, who are the living victims of their fanaticism and bigotry are being literally starved to death physically and morally. May I know why the Government countenances such a state of affairs, which is morally indefensible. Were this treatment meted out in another country it would be condemned as most inhuman barbarity perpetrated upon a helpless people. In our own country nothing is done about it. Worse still, it is quietly ignored.

Only few days ago many of them were men of ample means. Some of them masters of lakhs. To day their lot is worse than of 'Fakirs' for they cannot even beg, They are become human leeches, a nuisance to themselves and everybody around them. How can they hope to stand on their legs, how can they catch a ray of hope from a dark and dismal future, when their NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, the Government which was supposed to stand by them, neither ~~exerts~~^{exerts} itself to secure for them even a few crumbs from the properties left behind, nor supplies them the wherewithal to start a fresh in life.

Whatever hopes were roused by the recent agreement between Pakistan-India, on facilities to be offered for the disposal of movable or im-movable properties, have been dashed to the ground by the recent promulgation in Pakistan of an Ordinance, which throws to the wind all the elements of justice and constitutionalism.

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The effect of this unheard of piece of 'Firman' is to stop in toto all sales and leases of movable or im-movable properties. Not only that but the Ordinance gives power to the Pakistan Government to declare all previous transactions from 15th August 1947 null and void. This means all such transactions are no longer valid, and the Government of Pakistan has issued a PRESS NOTE to nullify all transactions relating to lands. Under the Ordinance any Partner or Manager who is running a business concern is to be ejected as unauthorised person from that concern, unless all partners of the concern stay in Pakistan permanently with their families. The famous biscuit factory of J.B. Mangharam and the famous firm of J. B. Advani would under the Ordinance be requisitioned. It is amazing how a partner or a Manager appointed even after 1st. August 1947 ^{are} an unauthorised person. Again nowhere is it shown in the Ordinance that any compensation is to be paid to Hindus if their houses lands Concerns are requisitioned. The Hindus can claim their property only if they remain permanently in Pakistan.

It amazes me, that while a hue and cry is raised for protecting the economic interests of Indians in Burma, Ceylon, and South Africa in our own land no one seems to care a fig what happens to the unfortunate Hindus displaced from Pakistan. With a stroke of pen, they have been robbed in day light of 1400 crores worth property, yet the Government, the people and the press look on unconcernedly, as if nothing has happened. The Pakistan Government is fully aware that the Indian Government will not embark upon any retaliatory measures. That is why it is daily becoming more and more aggressive in its designs to deprive the fatherless and wretched evacuees of all their properties, movable or im-movable.

In Pakistan every Hindu, who desires to carry on his business or cultivation or desires to continue in Government service, is required to live with his family. Otherwise his property or business is to be considered vacant and abandoned and as such liable to requisition, while in case of service, the Government servant is liable to dismissal and forfeiture of pension and provident fund. Instances are not wanting where the Pakistan Government has made use of these obnoxious powers.

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The conditions of Hindus, awaiting transshipment is still more distressing and appalling. They have absolutely no protection from the High Commissioner of India in Pakistan. All social workers, who render help to these oppressed evacuees or protect them from extortion, humiliation and tyranny of the Pakistan officials are indiscriminately arrested and put behind bars. Every now and then objections are raised in regard to the employment of particular personnel in evacuation work. Every time our High Commissioner meekly submits to the whims and caprices of the Pakistan Government. I can quote instances where persons in the pay of the Government of India, have had to cross the border ~~post~~ in haste to avoid arrest. The result is that today no competent social worker is available in Pakistan, and the poor harassed evacuees are in great distress and are subjected to extortion, maltreatment and humiliation.

That is only one part of the sad tale. A planned drive to compel the remnant of the Hindu propertied persons to quit Sind over night is in full swing. Accordingly respectable wealthy Hindus are being rounded up without any reason or rhyme and clapped in jail. The lucky ones, whom the strong and oppressive arm of the law has not reached, find their salvation in over night escape.

For this hellish state of affairs the Government of India must share the blame with her callous High Commissioner in Pakistan, who is a calm spectator to this daily tragedy.

I do not know if the Government of India and other Provincial Governments care to study what is being done for muslim refugees in Pakistan. If Governments in ^{the} Indian dominion would only attempt one-tenth of what Pakistan Government has already achieved, the sufferings of Hindu displaced persons in India would be greatly alleviated. It is true that the MINISTERS are not affected and, nor their VOTERS, by the two ORDINANCES in PAKISTAN. Mere trumpeting paper schemes for their rehabilitation and relief will only open the festering sores of the unfortunate and helpless.

It is a pity that MINISTERS continue to indulge in their usual pastimes, receptions, parties what not, when lakhs of displaced persons

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half-naked without shelter or avocation are on streets. It is the country not under the shadow of a national calamity, the like of which it has not experienced during the living memory. Many of the so-called servants of nation are drawing fat salaries, and continue to enjoy big palatial bungalows and indulge in lavish dinners and lunches, and waste thousands and lakhs on furniture, carpets, motor cars etc., from public treasury, and have still the cheek to say that all this loot is to maintain the dignity and prestige of India amongst nations of the world. Is it not murdering the soul of Gandhijee with vengeance? It would not be blasphemy if I said that the murder of Gandhijee has proved a great blessing to these guardians of India's prestige, for they are now perfectly free to indulge in all manner of luxuries and satisfy their lust for power and intrigue to the great detriment of the country and the people.

If then favouritism, nepotism, bribery and corruption are playing havoc with the life of the nation, the credit or onus is entirely with these MINISTERS. I know how the chief Secretary of a STATE GOVERNMENT once openly expressed that it did not matter if a few lakhs of Hindus are forcibly converted to Islam. He added that it would lessen the burden of India. I can say that one MINISTER has declared that a 'Sindhi' should be considered and treated like a SNAKE. Another MINISTER has written a letter to a responsible REFUGEE OFFICER not to appoint any SINDHI in any key position. This is not all. The black bureaucracy, who was publicly awarded a clean certificate in a recent speech by the Deputy Prime Minister, is openly following in the foot steps of its white predecessors by implementing the mischievous policy of divide and rule. Factions are created amongst the willless evacuees, and individuals are favoured at the cost of justice so that the main objective of rehabilitation goes to dogs. It will not be wrong if I say that the bureaucracy, the India Civil Service steel frame still rules the country and the Ministers as well.

Of the PRESS, which in the fight for freedom played such a glorious part, the less said the better. To their eternal shame and disgrace be it said that the Indian Press has systematically and deliberately shut out news pertaining to displaced persons, their woes and sorrows,

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their needs and their urgent problem. News from South America, Yugoslavia or Timbuctoo is freely published with great gusto, yet no paper in the premier city of Bombay has so far cared to publish the obnoxious Ordinances recently promulgated in Pakistan. Their comments, if at all, lack sympathy and magnanimity and often present a distorted picture of the issue, while any news that excites sympathy for displaced persons is suppressed in toto.

The MONSTER of provincialism is another evil the helpless mass of evacuees have to reckon with. From MINISTER in the cabinet, the bureaucratic official in his secretariat to the common man in the street, all are infected with the poison of parochial provincial and community interests. It is one and the same with Parsis, Gujratis and Maharashtrians. Thus the people from whom patriotism and humanity demanded a sincere welcome to the displaced unfortunate and a sharing of their sorrow, are not only indifferent and unsympathetic but openly antagonistic.

Day in and day out, we are given the sermon that we should rise above materialist conception of life and get reconciled to the loss of properties. Of course it is easy to give sermons. But before giving sermon our preachers should have taken a little trouble to see what it is, that the displaced persons really want. They do not want their lakhs to be returned to them, they are completely reconciled to the loss. What they want is some compensation or a minimum of funds, which may put them on the road to self-sufficiency. Let not the LEADERS view the the whole question of compensation of the lost properties in a materialistic light. Let them ponder on the enormity of moral havoc caused by keeping lakhs of well-to-do families on the verge of starvation without shelter, without any means of livelihood. I know how instances of moral lapses are multiplying as result of extreme penury. They cannot be lightly ignored as consequences of western modes of living.

Day and night we are hearing sermons that we must follow Gandhijee's ideal of NON-VIOLENCE, TRUTH, and BROTHERHOOD. And all from preachers, who have been consistently trampling upon the ideals and principles of Gandhijee. Does NON-VIOLENCE, TRUTH and BROTHERHOOD mean

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butchering of unfortunate NATIONALISTS OF INDIA inch by inch ? Had Gandhijee been alive would he have viewed such a dreadful tragedy with equanimity ? He would not have hesitated to assert that the full rehabilitation of displaced persons was the first moral and religious duty of everyone, big and small. He would have created moral fervour in the country, to aid the stranded, forsaken and forlorn, who now receive cold shoulder from all quarters. To set an example he would have gone and pitched his cottage amongst them and rendered them at least some service and consolation. None among the LEADERS has cared to follow, what the MASTER would have done. A flying visit to the neglected in camps or an interview to their real representatives are now things of the past. If at all a MINISTER takes into his head to spare a few minutes for these outcasts then at the behest of officials, royal receptions are organized to flatter the august personage into parting with some concessions and amenities. Yet nothing comes of it, for MINISTERS like cruel Gods are now-a-days hard to please.

It is all very easy to talk of a 'SECULAR STATE', but does 'SECULAR STATE' mean that the interests of its 'NATIONALISTS' are to be dusted off like dirt from the shoe. If 1400 crores worth property of Indian nationalists is looted and Government look like an important wretch, what respect can that Government command before its people or before the world ? Pakistan is simply chuckling at the simplicity and imbecility of the Indian Government, whose credulity is truly amazing.

It is obvious that whatever the intentions of the Government be, there is something radically wrong with either the conception of 'SECULAR STATE' or the policy that is pursued by the present Government, resulting in grave social, moral and economic complications. It is undeniable that the muslim element still cannot be relied upon in times of crisis. If nothing happened during the Hyderabad POLICE ACTION, it was because they were forestalled in their attempts to create trouble and the Nizam yielded quickly and abruptly. If the action had been protracted, they would have certainly struck at the opportune moment. Yet nothing is done to pack off this disloyal and fifth column element, to make way for the displaced persons, whose loyalty is sterling and unquestionable. On the contrary the former are patted, while the

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latter are looked upon with suspicion. strange logic indeed.

The Government in their supreme indifference is not alive to a very great and grim danger, which threatens to undermine the very economic fabric of India. Having cleared Western Pakistan of practically all non-muslims, the same policy of systematic economic persecution of Hindus in Eastern Pakistan is being pursued. About 15 lakhs have already migrated. More are migrating every day. Will the Government permit this one way traffic, thus contradicting their past declarations and policies? Is the mania of a SECULAR STATE to blind our leaders into undermining the safety of the STATE ?

The displaced persons are justified to demand the following,
from those who have vivesected India, and who stand to benefit from it:-

1: The present High Commissioner in Pakistan be forthwith called and replaced by a strong man like Shree K. M. Munshi.

2: Some kind of stern action be taken immediately to stop whole sale and reckless arrests of Hindus in Pakistan. Release of Hindus at present under detention without any justification should be sought.

3: Adequate protection must be guaranteed to social workers engaged in evacuation work in Pakistan. Local people must be sent to speed up the evacuation.

4: Harijans must be speedily evacuated from Sind under special guard and facilities, otherwise they will all be forcibly converted to Islam.

5: Adequate arrangements must be made for the transhipment of those who are waiting for evacuation. The present arrangements for receiving them in India are far from satisfactory, therefore need overhauling. Arrangements for food and water while in transit are highly necessary.

6: Rationing should be introduced in all cities in India including States, and no discrimination should be permitted in quantity as well as quality of food grains in any rationed locality.

7: In all camps, in India including States necessary amenities and facilities for privacy and decency be provided and the inmates should get honourable and human treatment.

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8: Rights of citizenship should forthwith be granted and equal rights in all public services and other Government licences guaranteed in spirit and letter.

9: All legal restrictions as regards purchase and transfer of running business concerns and professional premises must be forthwith scrapped all over India.

10: Vacant non-agricultural land, whether private or public should be allotted in plot for constructing residential and business premises should expeditiously be granted.

11: Legal steps with priority on war basis should be undertaken throughout India and States to grant retrospective relief in rents, where the rents have doubled the normal rent.

12: Leaguers and fifth columnists should be kept behind the bars or to be served with quit notice.

13: To check one way traffic, the High Commissioner in Pakistan be warned not to issue permits to Muslims. Since Pakistan Government lives and breathes deceit, falsehood and believes in Islamic State exchange of population on Government basis should forthwith be enforced and situation created so that the fifth columnists may per force leave Hindustan.

14: Displaced persons should be made free from, paying Income Tax for at least three years till they resettle in life.

15: Relief and Rehabilitation of displaced persons be given top priority and treated on war basis. Leaders like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Shree Jai Ramdas Dwlatram or a personality like them, who has a heart and mind, and who has previous experience of situation in floods, earth-quake and famines, should be placed in charge and given free powers with time limit to complete this serious problem.

16: Advisory Boards and finance corporation and such other august bodies be dissolved, both in centre as well as in Provinces and States, instead the Central chief be empowered to appoint his nominees. There should be no interference from any local Government in this task of relief and rehabilitation.

17: Till such arrangements are made, the finance corporation be pulled to expedite loan applications, and mandated to grant loans liberally and expeditiously. The entire red-tapism machinery be forthwith
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gone away with in this human task.

18: Government of India and Provinces should levy a special tax on the people of India including states and collect the dues to pay at least 25% of the value of the properties left behind by the displaced persons in Pakistan. In the meanwhile the Government can devise ways and means to knock out as much as it can.

19: All residential, business and professional premises of muslims who have left for Pakistan, be considered as vacant and abandoned and be allotted to displaced persons from Pakistan.

20: All advocates be taken up on roll and allowed to practice and there should be no legal hitches for them.

21: Pensioners be allowed part payment of their pension and provident fund pending settlement with Pakistan.

22: An austerity campaign be launched and public waste of money and food, now in vogue due to frequent dinners and lunches thrown out to Ministers and High Officials must be put an end to.

Let the Government stop fiddling, while the house is on fire. For HEAVEN'S sake do not allow the displaced people to be trampled upon, butchered or crushed. Do not build your prosperity on the miserable death of unfortunate millions. If for any reason you cannot protect the interests of your own NATIONALISTS, and cannot get over the habit of patting and appeasing fifth column leaguers, then let me beseech you with all humility in the interest of the safety of state, to please resign and give place to those who feel and believe in security and safety of the state first and everything else last.

In the end I would sincerely appeal to Acharya J. B. Kripalani, Shree Jairamdas Dowlatram and other sympathisers ~~of~~ to come out and openly lead the unfortunate suffering human beings in the right direction to undo the wrong that is being perpetrated on them. If they still remain complacent, I am afraid evil consequences will follow and the whole burden will lie on their shoulders. The displaced persons are now on the brink of a live volcano and further delay will land the country in an overwhelming catastrophe. Let us therefore be up and doing. JAI HIND.

Yours faithfully,
Vatammal G. Gidvani
(Vatammal G. Gidvani.)

Copies to :-

- 1:- Shree C. Rajagopalacharya Governor General New Delhi.
- 2:- Sardar Vallabhbhai J. Patel, Deputy Prime Minister "
- 3:- Shree Shyama Prasad Mookerji, Minister "
- 4:- " Mohanlal Saxena " "
- 5:- " Jairamdas Dowlatram " "
- 6:- Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President A.I.C.C., "
- 7:- Shree Pattabhu Sitaramaya, " Elect A. I. C. C., "
- 8:- " J. B. Kripalani, ex-President A.I.C.C., "
- 9:- Babu Parshtandas Tandon, Lucknow.
- 10:- Shree Vinoba Bhavey, Sewagram.
- 11:- Professor Bhansale, "
- 12:- Dr. M. R. Jakar, Poona.
- 13:- Master Tarasingh Akali, Amritsar.
- 14:- Sardar Sardul Singh Kaveshar, "
- 15:- Shree Jai Prakash Narain Bombay.
- 16:- " K. M. Munshi, "
- 17:- All Premiers of Provinces in India
- 18:- All Premiers of States in India
- 19:- Shree Sri Parkash High Commissioner in Pakistan, Karachi.
- 20:- " M. S. Anney, Governor of Bihar, Patna.
- 21:- Mrs. Sarojani Naidu, Governor of U.P., Lucknow.
- 22:- H. N. Kunzru, Allahabad.
- 23:- Shree Kiren Shankar Roy, Calcutta.
- 24:- " Bhimsen Sachar, Amritsar.
- 25:- " " Prakasham, Madras.
- 26:- Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani, New Delhi.
- 27:- Professor Ganshyam Jethanand, Poona.
- 28:- Shri Thakur Rupa, New Delhi.
- 29:- Shrimati Rameshwami Nehu "
- 30:- Shree Piyarellal Sec. Mahatma Gandhi. Dacca

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